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January 17, 2013

Bill Black's Scoping Comments for GPT/Custer Spur EIS

As noted above, my name is Bill Black. I first came to Bellingham/Whatcom County in 1965 to attend Western. Since 1970, when I first became involved in commercial fishing in Alaska, I've been returning to Bellingham/Whatcom County for the winters. Over the course of these many years I've become deeply rooted in both Bellingham/Whatcom County and the Cordova area of Alaska. What follows is a very brief description of me and just a few of the things which have shaped my view of the proposed coal port.

It occasionally seems as though I've successfully raised three kids! They're all college graduates and they're all healthy. We all could go for a run together! And we all love each other.

Rose, the Mother of my younger two, my daughters, died here at home in Bellingham from complications of asthma one sunny summer day in 2003.

I'd made my living for 17 years fishing the waters of Prince William Sound, Alaska and the Gulf of Alaska before the reckless grounding of the Exxon Valdez and the subsequent oil spill in 1989. I've been on those black beaches. On the other hand, and much more both usual and positive, I've also seen and been a recipient of tremendous natural abundances which, at times, has exceeded my imagination (and my fish hold!). I'm very sincerely and humbly an Alaskan witness to the abundance the Pacific Ocean and the land can yield if allowed to remain clean and unencumbered. I'm very grateful for what I've been able to take part in and witness.

The following list consists of what I perceive as potential problems and problematic issues with the GPT/Custer Spur project as envisioned and the issues I would like to see studied, considered and weighed prior to launching such a coal project.

1. **AIR QUALITY QUESTIONS.** There are four segments to this one, all of which, one can safely assume, are going to put significant carbon into our atmosphere. A. The actual mining of the coal. B. The rail transport. C. The ships used to haul all this coal across the Pacific Ocean. D. And last, but not least, the burning of the coal itself.

- A. We've all seen photos of the monstrous machines used to dig up this Powder River coal. Machinery that big does not run on the cheap. How much energy resources (presumably in the form of diesel) are consumed in the mining and loading operation per ton of Powder River coal currently?
- B. Pulling trains loaded with coal as far as is planned and then returning them empty to the coal fields is going to require tremendous amounts of fuel. How much fuel?
- C. Likewise the ship transport of the coal to Asia across the Pacific. Also ship harbor air pollution has been identified as a major culprit in port city air pollution. I'd like to see general coal ship exhaust effects quantified and evaluated.
- D. In my opinion it is likely the most significant pollution, even for us here in the Pacific Northwest (including Alaska) will be the result of the actual burning of the coal in Asia. Is my estimation accurate?

As mentioned previously, my wife who (was the mother of my daughters) died suddenly and unexpectedly of asthma here in Bellingham. There is a certain knowledge gained by families who suffer the pre-mature death of a family member. Are there additional asthma related deaths and individual points of asthma suffering we can anticipate here in Whatcom County as a result of this project? If so, how many?

Ocean acidification is becoming a source of concern for some. Perhaps initially and particularly a source of concern for those who are relying every year, like myself, on a healthy ocean for their living. There have been attempts to quantify the number of people and families here in Whatcom County who do just that either directly (as in fishing or processing), or indirectly as in boat and net building. Keep in mind that we here in Whatcom County are the closest in the Lower 48 to Alaska and it's currently booming fisheries. Suffice it to say that it would be difficult to overstate the value that healthy fisheries constitute for Whatcom County. A lot of that value is seemingly invisible. People, such as myself, just appear or reappear here in Whatcom County with money to spend on property taxes, food, tuition, new cars on Iowa Street, books at bookstores, chair tickets at Baker and/or any of the countless other ways money makes our Whatcom County world go around.

My question here is: Might air pollution resulting from the GPT project, if allowed, conceivably injure fisheries removed from Whatcom County as well as in Whatcom County and thence the money that silently flows into Whatcom County?

And my MAIN question here is....Is this Environmental IMPACT Statement going to live up to it's name and consider all the impacts to our environment, including global warming?

- 2. **WATER BORNE POLLUTION.** On December 7, 2012 a giant coal ship took out 300 feet of the Westshore coal loading dock which is just a half mile north of the U.S/Canadian border here in Whatcom County. Hours later, when the scene could be photographed, there was still coal drooling into the water from the ends of the dock which remained. There had to have been a lot of loose coal flow into U.S. waters.

There are already three major industrial facilities at Cherry Point, including two of Washington State's five petroleum refineries. When I first saw the photos of the severed and ripped away Westshore dock my first thought was...."good thing there wasn't a laden tanker tied up to that dock!"

Half of the herring in Puget Sound and the Straits of Juan de Fuca have historically spawned at Cherry Point. By 2000 the historic amount of herring which spawned at Cherry Point, or some 15 thousand tons, had been reduced to a little over 1 thousand tons. In response, Washington State proclaimed Cherry Point as an Aquatic Reserve in the hope that the Cherry Point herring, a very basis of the Puget food chain, could survive.

We've learned one thing, for sure, from the Exxon Valdez misadventure. That is that herring are super sensitive to any oil in the water. And the damage from an oil spill relative to the herring is very persistent. My question, then, is that given all the uncertainties of water borne shipping how does introducing the number of large coal ships contemplated for such a coal port as GPT not constitute grave risk in light of the proximity of two major petroleum refineries already receiving and processing oil and hoping, I submit, to process a whole lot of Arctic oil on into the future?